

Message Text

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S E C R E T GABORONE 0551

EXDIS

EMBASSY FOR CAPETOWN

E.O. 11652: XGDS-2
TAGS: PDEV RH UK BC
SUBJECT: RHODESIA: SUGGESTIONS FOR A HOLDING ACTION

REF: STATE 049593

1. A HOLDING ACTION, TO BE SUCCESSFUL, HAS TO TAKE
ACCOUNT OF THE TOTAL ENVIRONMENT IN WHICH IT IS LAUNCHED.
IN BOTSWANA THREE BROAD CONCERNS DOMINATE THE SCENE:
(A) THERE IS CONTINUING BELIEF THAT ANY LASTING SOLUTIONS
IN ZIMBABWE MUST BE BASED ON THE WILL OF THE PEOPLE AS
EXPRESSED IN FREE AND FAIR ELECTIONS;
(B) ANY ATTEMPT TO BYPASS THIS PROCESS OR EXCLUDE
SIGNIFICANT FORCES CANNOT SUCCEED;

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(C) BECAUSE ALL THE MAJOR PARTIES ARE NOT YET READY
TO SUBMIT TO, OR ABIDE BY, A FREE AND FAIR ELECTION
OR RENOUNCE FORCE IN PROMOTING THEIR OBJECTIVES, THE
GOB ANTICIPATES CONTINUING CONFLICT, INCLUDING
GUERRILLA ACTIVITY, OVER THE COMING MONTHS WHICH IS
EXPECTED TO SPILL OVER INTO BOTSWANA.

2. THE GOB IS CONVINCED THAT THE PRESENT PERIOD OF POLITICAL MANEUVERING IS INEVITABLE GIVEN THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN AND WITHIN BOTH SIDES. WHILE OUTWARDLY ADOPTING A POSTURE OF WATCHFUL WAITING, THE GOB IS SEEKING TO MOBILIZE AND STRENGTHEN ITS DEFENSE FORCES TO ENABLE IT TO ASSERT AND MAINTAIN ITS TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY. IT REMAINS HIGHLY SKEPTICAL ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF SIGNIFICANT RAPPROACHMENT BETWEEN THE MAJOR CONTENDERS FOR POWER IN ZIMBABWE, I.E., PATRIOTIC FRONT AND SALISBURY GROUP. NEVERTHELESS, THEY ARE RELUCTANT HERE TO DO ANYTHING THAT WOULD DISCOURAGE SUCH EFFORTS AND ARE WILLING TO ALLOW PARTIES TIME TO CONDUCT THEIR RESPECTIVE PROBES WHICH THEY KNOW ARE GOING ON. THEY RECOGNIZE, BUT HAVE NOT SHOWN ALARM CONCERNING, THE LOSS OF MOMENTUM IN THE ANGLO-AMERICAN PROPOSALS (AAP) FOLLOWING THE FEBRUARY 15 ANNOUNCEMENT FROM SALISBURY.

3. IN BRIEF, THE GOB IS PSYCHOLOGICALLY PREPARED FOR A HOLDING ACTION TO KEEP THE AAP ALIVE AND CAN BE COUNTED UPON TO ASSIST. THE ESSENCE OF A SUCCESSFUL ACTION, JUDGING FROM GOB ATTITUDES TO DATE, LIES IN THE AFFIRMATION OF PRINCIPLES UNDERLYING THE AAP. THESE PRINCIPLES ARE:

(A) THE RIGHT OF ZIMBABWEANS TO SELF-DETERMINATION AND TO CHOOSE THEIR LEADERS IN FREE AND FAIR
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ELECTIONS INCLUDING THE PARTICIPATION OF ALL PARTIES;
(B) THE DEVELOPMENT OF INTERIM ARRANGEMENTS UNDER WHICH THESE CHOICES WOULD BE EXERCISED THAT WILL NOT UNDERMINE AND DISTORT THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS, E.G., BY NEUTRALIZATION OF ARMED FORCES AND SUPERVISION OF ELECTIONS BY INTERNATIONALLY ACCEPTABLE AUTHORITY;
AT THE SAME TIME, WE SHOULD REEMPHASIZE OUR BELIEF THAT AAP BEST EMBODY THE ABOVE PRINCIPLES AND CONSTITUTE THE BEST AVAILABLE DESIGN FOR ZIMBABWE SETTLEMENT.

4. IN REAFFIRMING BROAD PRINCIPLES, SUCH AS THE ABOVE, THE UK AND US WOULD:

(A) PRESERVE THEIR CREDIBILITY BY KEEPING A CONSISTENT RECORD OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE STATEMENTS;

(B) REAFFIRM STANDARDS TO BE USED IN JUDGING ANY ACTIONS OF PATRIOTIC FRONT AND/OR PROCLAMATIONS FROM SALISBURY, THEREBY MAINTAINING SOME PRESSURE TOWARD ADHERENCE TO THOSE STANDARDS BY ALL NATIONALIST GROUPS.

5. IN SUMMARY, THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS IS NOT ONLY

INTERNATIONALLY ACCEPTABLE MEANS BUT ALSO THE MOST
PRACTICAL METHOD OF ACHIEVING PEACEFUL SOLUTION. WE
BELIEVE THAT THE RECORD OF MOVEMENT, IF ONLY GRADUAL,
OF ALL PARTIES TOWARD MEETING CRITERIA OUTLINED IN
THE AAP IS THE BEST INDICATION THAT THEY REMAIN A
VALID OBJECTIVE AND THE BEST SOLUTION IN THE LONG RUN.
NORLAND

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